



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Senator Petrowski: Budget a ‘Win’ for Northcentral Wisconsin

MADISON - The 2019-2021 Wisconsin State Budget is headed to the governor’s desk following approval today by the Wisconsin State Senate. The biennial budget, which funds our educational and workforce development initiatives, reduces the state’s tax burden, and protects our seniors and the most vulnerable citizens, was passed by both houses of the legislature prior to the end of the state’s fiscal year.

Senator Jerry Petrowski (R-Marathon) voted in favor of the two-year spending proposal, noting that it reflects the priorities of Wisconsin citizens. “This budget is the result of listening to the concerns, ideas, and opinions of people across the state,” said Senator Petrowski, “and is a substantial ‘win’ for the people of northcentral Wisconsin.”

A cornerstone of the proposal is \$12.3 billion for K-12 educational funding in the state, the largest investment in our kids’ education in state history. Over the two years of the budget, schools across Wisconsin will receive an additional \$604 per pupil in state funding to strengthen our public schools.

The budget also underscores our commitment to higher education by freezing tuition for Wisconsin students at the University of Wisconsin. In addition, the plan calls for nearly \$32 million for classroom renovations and technological upgrades at the UW, allowing our students the opportunities to learn the skills they need to be competitive in the ever-changing global marketplace. There’s also an additional \$18 million investment in our state’s technical schools to help schools like Northcentral Technical College increase slots for high-demand programs like nursing and construction trades. Petrowski said that these dollars will help students earn degrees and, in turn, help area employers by allowing students to more quickly enter the Wisconsin workforce.

“Freezing tuition makes the option of going to college more affordable and attainable for Wisconsin students,” added Senator Petrowski. “Because of the tuition freeze, the average student at UW Stevens Point will save over \$7,000 on their four-year degree and will graduate with significantly less debt.”

The budget also invests the most money in a decade for state highway rehabilitation, increasing that program by \$320 million. It also provides \$90 million more to the Local Road Improvement Program and \$66 million more to the General Transportation Aids program to help counties, cities, villages, and towns improve our local roads. The transportation package includes a provision championed by Senator Petrowski that will allocate an additional \$5 million for low-revenue town road maintenance.

“As I’ve spoken with local elected officials across the district, they have repeatedly asked for more help in fixing the roads in their communities that have been neglected for too long. This budget answers that request and will help making driving safer along these rural roadways,” continued Senator Petrowski.

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Additionally, Senator Petrowski worked to increase hospital payments and reimbursement rates to nursing homes, which will not only help lower the costs of health care in Wisconsin, but will translate into more competitive wages for nurses and certified nursing assistants (CNAs) working in northcentral Wisconsin. He noted that the area has seen a number of nursing homes close recently both because of the historically-low reimbursement rates and the inability to attract and retain qualified staff. The dollars allocated in the budget should help to keep these facilities open and more affordable for our aging senior population.

The budget package also contains more money for rural broadband access by providing more than \$44 million in a matching grant program, which more than doubles the amount of funding in the past five years of the program combined, and is expected to provide high-speed Internet access to thousands of small businesses, families, farmers, and students in the rural areas of Wisconsin.

While the budget bolsters programs and initiatives that will help keep Wisconsin's economy moving forward, it also provides a tax cut to low- and middle-income families. In addition to rejecting Governor Evers' proposal to increase the gas tax by 8 cents a gallon, the final budget package also provides nearly \$500 million in tax relief, specifically targeting those residents and families making less than \$50,000 a year. In fact, according to the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the average taxpayer will see a \$238 reduction in their state tax burden.

Senator Petrowski noted that while not perfect, the budget package funds priorities important to the people he represents.

"This package represents a balanced approach and makes good on our commitments to education, safe roads, affordable health care, and a better business climate in Wisconsin," said Senator Petrowski. "It also makes living in Wisconsin more affordable by cutting income taxes and keeping property taxes in check. This budget is the result of working together in divided government to keep Wisconsin a great place to live, work, and raise a family."

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